REACTION

By Phil McCombs
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Disappointment and anger engulfed the Washington area yesterday following the news that the Iranian rescue mission had failed and eight U.S. servicemen lay dead on a Middle Eastern desert.

"It's so sad," said Metrobus driver Jackie Williams. "America is just looking bad these days all around," said mailman John Christopher. Beverli Reed, a college senior, twisted her white handkerchief nervously. "This country has got to get a break soon," she said.

There was bitterness, too, and for many something close to a sense of shame.

"Couldn't they at least have brought the bodies out?" said an Army colonel in disgust at the Pentagon as he watched a television account of the rescue attempt.

"We made a fool of ourselves," said 17-year-old Curtis Early, a high school senior in Downsville, N.Y., who was in Washington on a class trip.

"Too little, too late," said Richard Larsen of Fairfax County. "We have to stop pussyfooting around," echoed his wife, Marian.

"Another glorious *faux pas* for Jimmy Carter," said Frank Jordan of Olney.

John Sewall, a 43-year-old Minneapolis resident here for a Washington for Jesus rally next week, said: "Our country has made so

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many false attempts to show we're still a superpower. We've been embarrassed in the Bay of Pigs and in Vietnam. . . . Other nations [are] laughing at us."

Prince George's County Council member Francis B. Francois said he was "appalled" at the news. "After having 137 days to plan a military operation like that, you'd think we'd do better," he said. "Maybe we should have contracted it out to the Israelis."

But at the same time, others admitted to a sneaking sense of pride that President Carter—and the nation—had finally done something other than jawbone. "Thanks Mr. Pres., Try Again," was the sign that appeared in the window of a Glen Burnie liquor store yesterday.

At White Flint shopping mall in Montgomery County, most people said it was good that Carter had at least tried the rescue attempt. "I'm sorry that eight people were killed, but I'm proud that we at least tried," said Marv Brooks, 36, a radio sports announcer.

Bob Riffle of Glenmont said he was so moved that he immediately sat down and wrote a peronal note to President Carter. "I told him that I was sorry it didn't work out," Riffle said. "I may not like Carter, and I'm a Republican. But I do support the president in his dealings with Iran."

"Let's face it," said Mark Berger of Vienna. "If the headline this morning had read that most of the hostages had escaped in a daring raid, we all would have been ready to bow down and kiss Carter's feet. People would be calling him a crafty genius."

Others were openly critical of Carter, however.

"It's Carter's fault and he just handed the election to Ronald Reagan," said an Air Force colonel who was watching the television at the Pentagon with about 200 other soldiers and civilian employes.

"They should have gone on with the five helicopters they had left," said Susan Bingham of Columbia, Md. "It's just typical of Carter. It will take him another six months to decide to do something else."

Some felt that the operation was too dangerous and should never have been tried.

"Carter was taking too much of a chance," said James A. Lyons, who was dumping garbage into a truck in Bethesda. "The hostages could have been shot."

On the sidewalk in front of the White House, about 75 demonstrators organized by the Coalition for a Non-Nuclear World, a group that has scheduled an antinuclear rally here for the weekend, protested the abortive raid.

"Bring the Army home, leave Iran alone," they chanted. And: "Hell no, we won't go, we won't fight for Texaco."

The coalition issued a statement saying the rescue attempt signals "the most frightening brush with world catastrophe since the Cuban missile crisis."

But others felt that more military action is necessary to save the hostages.

"We should tell them we're coming in next Tuesday to get our people: 'You kill them, fine, and we'll wipe your country off the map,'" said Prince George's County deputy sheriff Gary Powers. "If the Russians give us trouble we should say, 'Okay, we'll come after you next.'"

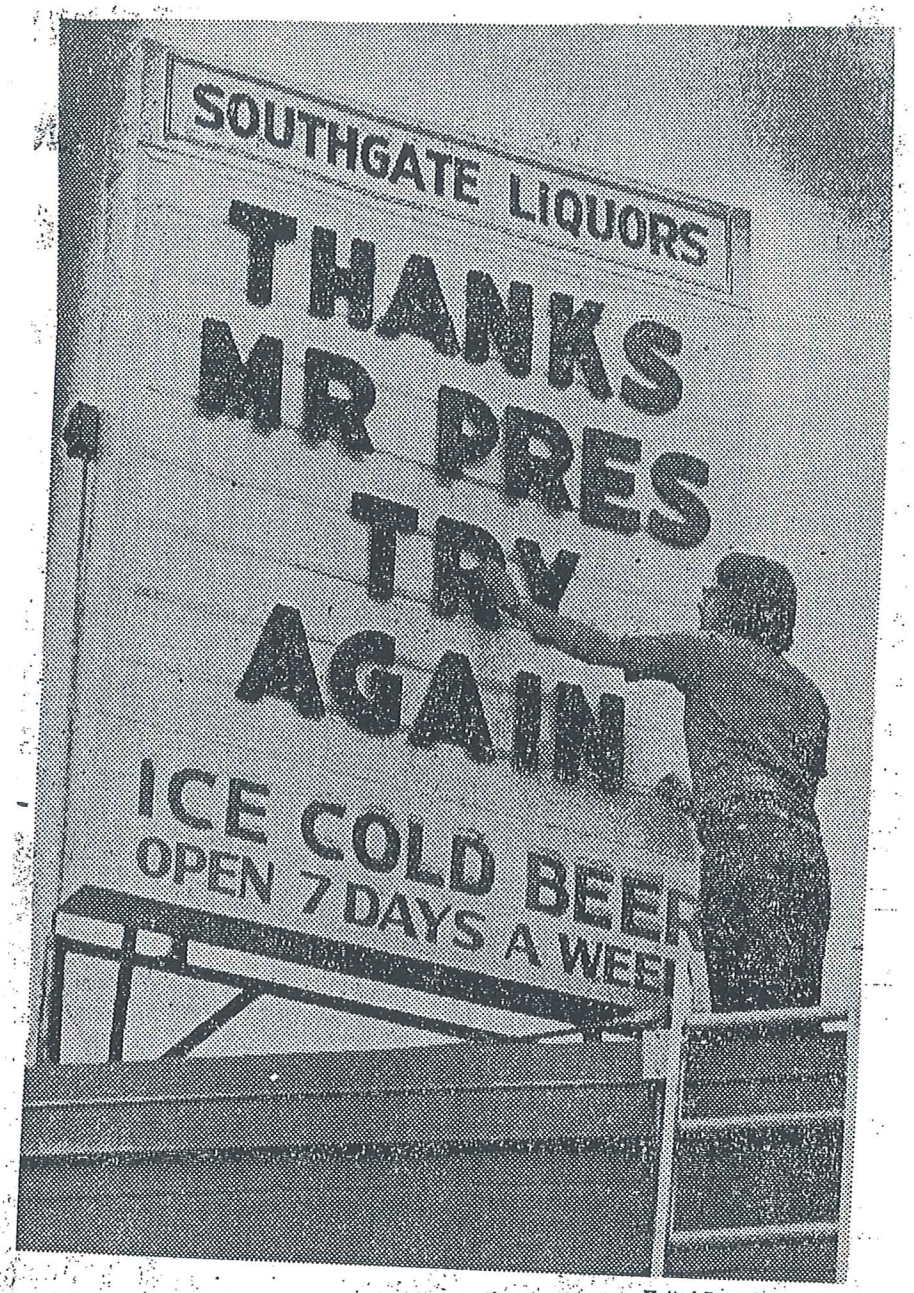
Mouton Oscar, the 53-year-old owner of a downtown printing company, said, "We have to stand up for what's right and not back off."

Oscar took out his wallet and showed a picture of his 19-year-old son, a U.S. Marine. He said he would be glad to see his son go to Tehran to free the hostages.

"I'm ready to go, too," he said.

There was a good deal of wonderment about the technological side of the failure.

"We're supposed to be the most powerful nation in the world and we can't even get six helicopters to



United Press International

Among mixed reactions to the abortive rescue attempt, Richard Legare, a liquor store manager in Glen Burnie, Md., spells out his feelings on store's billboard.

'We're supposed to be the most powerful nation . . . and we can't even get six helicopters to work.'

work," is the way construction worker Joseph Brewer plainly put it.

"In the days when I was an active duty, there would have been sufficient maintenance so that this type of thing wouldn't have happened," said Jess Larson, an Air Force retiree who was in the Army-Navy Club in downtown Washington yesterday.

Also at the club was retired Army Gen. John Seybol, who said he has long been concerned with the sophistication of much of today's military equipment. Personnel who know how to maintain it adequately, he said, "could probably make more money in a job outside the military."

Many people looked beyond the immediate facts of the moment to the issues involved.

"This has now gone beyond the fate of the 50 hostages and affects all Americans," said Herbert Enman, a Massachusetts resident who was touring Alexandria yesterday.

"We've got to do something drastic soon," added his wife, Marcia. "The Iranians have taken advantage of and made fools of the Americans for too long. The whole life style of the U. S. is jeopardized."

Olin Greene, a 30-year-old Arlington resident, put it this way: "In a situation like this we're talking about America, and we can't be pushed around forever."

Jeff Fratter, 26, interviewed at Tysons Corner yesterday, said he didn't understand the timing of the raid since Carter has just recently applied strong economic sanctions against Iran.

"And how can we expect our European allies to go along with us if we surprise them like this?" Fratter reasoned.

A number of people were skeptical about the government's version of events.

"All along as I'm watching the TV I'm thinking, 'How many versions of this are we going to hear?'," said Karen Greenlee, a registered nurse from Ohio.

Gaithersburg construction worker John Brooks, 22, said, "I think it's a crock. I don't think it ever happened. They just have to say something because they haven't tried nothin' so far."

Underlying many of the reactions yesterday was an abiding concern for the hostages themselves—as human beings, not as an issue—and their fate.

"I don't think the U. S. military can

do anything now, I think they've lost the hostages now," said Upper Marlboro store clerk Edi Underwood.

Carol Dagnal of Great Falls said Carter deserves support "for at least trying." But, she added with a look of concern, "I just pray to God that we're still able to get the hostages out somehow."

Also contributing to this report were Washington Post staff writers Sandra Boodman, Kenneth Bredemeier, Jackson Diehl, Thomas Grubisich, Stephanie Mansfield, Courtland Milloy, Robert Meyers, Saundra Saperstein, Margaret Shapiro, Loretta Tofani, Judith Valente, Benjamin Weiser and Ron White.